

Tulane's Health Policy and Management Department reimagines healthcare leadership education

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The MMM program and the Graduate Certificate in Health Care Leadership and Innovation focus on developing authentic, positive-change leaders who think differently and lead empathetically with a public health perspective.

The changing health care market challenges physicians, nurses, and administrators to stay on top of best practices. The Department of Health Policy and Management at Tulane University has been helping health system leaders meet this challenge with their Graduate Certificate in Health Care Leadership and Innovation while preparing for a national relaunch of its Master of Medical Management (MMM) program.

The Graduate Certificate in Health Care Leadership and Innovation prepares mid and senior-level leaders in the health care industry for the changing landscape by giving them the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to deliver and design innovative health care services.

Before launching a certificate program with a health system, the Tulane team initiates a detailed inquiry process with senior leaders to assess system-specific opportunities, culture, challenges, and future vision. The Tulane team then incorporates these findings and themes into the program curriculum, a 15-credit hour graduate certificate. The certificate consists of five three-credit courses taken over one year.

The certificate's courses carry graduate degree credit and can be applied toward a master's degree. In addition to the monthly on-site sessions, students also participate in distance and worksite experiential activities, along with visiting scholars' conferences.

“The response to the certificate program shows there is a real demand for this. It's indicative of what is happening in the market. These physician and administrative leaders today need a business acumen and relational skill set that they didn't necessarily get in their professional training,” says [Mollye Demosthenidy](#), clinical associate professor of health policy and management.

The MMM program complements the certificate program. This cohort-based professional master's degree program was designed exclusively for physicians and other clinical leaders to promote effective management techniques, such as authentic leadership, creative thinking to improve health care systems, and empathy among health care practitioners.

Tulane was the first to offer the MMM degree. In 1997, [Dr. Gene Beyt](#) was a faculty member of the inaugural MMM class to graduate from the school. The program ran until 2005, when Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters paused the program. Beyt has now returned to lead the MMM program.

"The program began in 1997, and by 2005, approximately 70% of the responding 500 MMM alumni from Tulane and the other partner universities rated MMM on-the-job training as excellent because of the positive effect it had on their management career," says Dr. Beyt. "Tulane MMM alumni can now be found in executive-level management positions throughout the United States."



Dr. Gene Beyt (right) and Mollye Demosthenidy, JD, MHA

The school took the first steps toward relaunching the program by offering the graduate certificate program to physicians and administrators at Ochsner Health System. Based on the success of that program, the MMM degree program was officially relaunched in January of 2021 with a class of 24 Ochsner physicians. That cohort is ongoing.

Once launched, the MMM program can be completed in approximately 16 months in an executive format. The program consists of 36 credit hours of coursework, complemented by executive coaching and a unique immersion experience in New Orleans. In addition, each student is assigned a mentor who will work with the clinician-student to develop a path for positive change.

The program culminates with a capstone project that allows the student to take the program's content, including guidance from mentors and their experience during the immersion, and apply it to their personal journey. The result is a guide depicting where they have been, where they are going, and how they will get there.

"We want to reimagine physician executive education," says Dr. Thomas LaVeist, dean of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. "Great managers can have a significant impact at any institution. By learning how to work collaboratively and innovate in the workplace, clinician leaders can solve major problems within their health care practice, reduce employee turnover, and provide better care to patients. The Graduate Certificate in Health Care Leadership and Innovation and Master of Medical Management programs would be a huge benefit to any health care institution."

Both programs use a scholar/practitioner faculty model with full-time academic faculty and senior-ranking physician executives as contributing faculty.

"What we've done in this program is to curate scholarly practitioners, who are senior leaders, great educators, and role models for our students," says Beyt. "The scholar-practitioners we have chosen have broad enough skill sets to help with any specialty an institution might have, and many of our practitioners are currently working for multiple institutions around the country. We also bring in visiting scholars with certain specialties when needed. This allows for physicians to learn from many different perspectives and still have strong core competencies."

What makes the Tulane program different from other physician leadership programs? Three unique overarching themes form the basis of the program:

- The program focuses on developing authentic, positive-change leaders who think differently and lead change empathetically with a public health perspective.
- The program fosters creativity, innovation, and human-centered design tools necessary to build a consumer-driven organization with a market-driven strategy.
- The program supports forming a positive workplace culture and creating organizations that learn and grow, providing a compassionate and positive experience for patients and coworkers.

“For our programs, stakeholder input is vital at every step in creating a valued contribution to physician leadership development,” says Beyt. “The programs’ growth will be data-informed, supported by an alumni and student advisory panel, and an ongoing literature review so that the program can continue to improve over time.”